



Rams Head Coach Sean McVay – Media Availability – December 21, 2020

(On injury updates)

"(RB) Cam Akers battled through a high ankle sprain. He is a war daddy, but he's going to be out for at least the next week or so. He's a tough kid, man, the way he battled through, but he does have a high ankle sprain, which usually is a couple of weeks. He'll definitely miss this game, which will be a big blow to us and then we'll see what happens after that. And then, we placed (DL) Eric Banks on the COVID-IR."

(On if that means RB Darrell Henderson Jr. and RB Malcolm Brown will fill in for Akers absence)

"It does. Yeah."

(On who will take the lead running back role)

"I mean they'll both get work. As far as the specifics, I'm not really sure. We're just getting into the initial parts of the game plan. I mean, literally we just got that information about Cam, probably a couple hours ago, so it's all relatively new. We'll talk to those guys first and we'll develop a game plan, but I can tell you that both those guys will be heavily involved."

(On if it was Akers decision to return to the game after his injury occurred)

"Yeah, it was. I mean, I think it's a credit to how tough this kid is. I think in a lot of instances too, you get going, you get your adrenaline going, you're in the midst of a game and it gets banged up and then the soreness of it and then when you get a picture of it with an MRI, you realize, 'Oh my gosh, this guy was playing through some real stuff.' It just kind of further reiterates what we think of him, but you always want guys to be smart about it, but he is a war daddy and made a bunch of big plays. Unfortunately, some of them got called back, but he gave us a chance. You can see why we have so much confidence in what he's going to be for the future."

(On S John Johnson III's comments after the game about working on building a culture of a winning team)

"I think when you look at it, we had opportunities to win and close out that game. Really all of our losses, there's been those opportunities. Whether you look at both the games against San Fran, the Bills' game earlier this year, you look at that game yesterday. The Miami game was the only one that it really was more than a possession at the end of the game. But I would argue that, credit to them, but that was self-inflicted wounds that we beat ourselves there. (I) can't disagree with that. I think you've got to figure out how to make those plays in crunch time. I think we talked about playing complementary football. I think when you look at it, the offense goes three-and-out on the first possession, we've got a third down and two where we've got (TE) Gerald Everett on a double move and a protection pickup that's pretty standard and don't get a chance to get that off, so then you put our defense on the field, they score on their opening possession. Then you look at the next three series that our defense is on the field, they force, really a four-and-out because the first play of the second series, they got a penalty. Then their third and fourth series, they're on sudden-change short fields because of a turnover offensively and a blocked punt on special teams. Those are things that, you're down 13-0 before you know it and you can't do that. I think those are things where we're figuring out how to consistently find ways to close out and win games and that's why I think, I love the way that we've responded, but you don't want to have to respond too many times to these tough outings."

(On how much veteran players having playoff experience plays into his decision to sign a player)

"Yeah, that's a part of it. I think it all depends on how they fit within the structure of what we already have and the players that we already have in-house. At the end of the day, we have to play well in all three phases. We have to do things that are in alignment with playing winning football consistently. In some instances, we've done that and yesterday was definitely not that."

(On if S Taylor Rapp and ILB Micah Kiser will return this week)

"I don't think so for those guys."

(On if Rapp and Kiser are on track)

"We might have a chance with (ILB) Micah (Kiser). Probably not with (S) Taylor Rapp."

(On if any of the self-inflicted errors standout to him from yesterday's lost)

"When I say self-inflicted wounds, I'm talking about a lot of the penalties that you guys all saw, or execution in critical moments. Those are things that didn't really take the tape to go back and be aware of those, we kind of know in the midst of the game what's going on. Those critical situations have kind of caught up to us. I thought, kind of like what I was just mentioning, is the start of the game, you dig yourself in a hole and it's NFL football. It ends up being difficult to dig out. We gave ourselves a chance, you look at (WR) Nsimba (Webster) had the long punt return and you have a chance to go score on that drive with about six minutes left in the game. We got a third and a fourth down, both versus man-coverage situations and those are plays that we have to be able to make or progress. There's options and there's things that if we want to find a way to win those games, those are the plays that you make to come away with the wins."

(On not running the ball in the first half and how to fix that)

"I think in a lot of instances, the first half was reflective of taking some negatives. You'd get a positive and then you take a sack, or you'd get a big run that goes out for 10 yards, then you'd get a holding on the second drive of the game. I think usually when we run the football well, that's reflective of moving the football well and when you don't, usually, you're not going to be as efficient on third down. I think it all goes hand-in-hand. I think how poor we were on third downs and some of the third-and-longers that we were in, as a result of whether it was inefficient runs or just taking negatives on early downs, was a big reflection of just the lack of success and continuity that we were able to have in a lot of our drives in the first half offensively."

(On balancing the run-pass ratio throughout the game when trailing)

"I never really felt like it was enough of a deficit that you had to really feel like you want to go heavy pass or anything like that. I think it was a good balance. I think you saw that reflected in the couple of scoring drives that we did have. Even in the situation where there's six minutes left, those were aggressive but plays that we felt good about on third and fourth down that ultimately, we didn't make a play from on the 37-yard line."

(On what the loss says about the character of the team)

"It says that they're a resilient group. That's the message that's been consistent with every one of the losses that we've had in the previous four times. You'd like to think we know what a great challenge it's going to be this week. Familiar opponent, there's a lot riding on this game. Fortunately for us, as poor as yesterday was, we have an opportunity to respond and a division game at their place with a lot at stake. So, I do trust the character of this football team. I trust the resilience and that's what we're going to do. That's all I know how to do, like I mentioned to you guys yesterday. The only thing that makes you feel better is when you say, 'All right, let's learn from it, let's own it, and then let's move forward accordingly.' Because dwelling on it or getting pissed off about it really doesn't do you any good as far as for how you move forward to the next week. I'd like to think that the players and the coaches take a similar approach and our players are resilient and our coaches are going to do the same thing."

(On his evaluation of K Matt Gay over the past few weeks)

"I think it's consistency. I mean, he's hitting the ball really well. I think the timing, the rapport between (P) Johnny (Hekker) and (LS) Jake (McQuaide) and him has definitely been demonstrated. We've got to be a little bit cleaner in some of the protections. We did have a couple of guys come clean, but he was still able to get it off in enough time with enough height that it didn't affect being able to convert on those extra points or field goals. I thought he kicked off really well too. (K) Matt (Gay) has done a really nice job for us."

(On how to improve the team's consistency)

"If I had the answer, that's something that we're always striving for. I think it's really just starting fast and finishing strong. We've talked about it. I think there's been moments in games where you've seen good consistency, offensively, throughout and then there's been moments when it hasn't been. I think that's the same thing with special teams. Then for the most part, defense has been pretty consistent. It's about putting all three phases together. I think we've shown glimpses of doing that, which is why I think we've won enough games to be relevant at this point, but it is something that we've got to be able to get ahold on and there's different reasons for it. We've got to play consistently well at the key spots and usually when we do that, good things happen."

(On if he was surprised more Rams weren't selected for the 2021 Pro Bowl)

"I certainly feel like there was a couple of guys deserving of it. Congratulations to (CB) Jalen (Ramsey) and (DL) Aaron (Donald), both very deserving of that have been instrumental parts of the success we've had as a team. They've consistently played well week-in and week-out. I think when you look at some of those things, it is a reflection of some of your numbers, specifically from an offensive-production standpoint and we've spread the ball around. You've got a handful of backs and a variety of receivers, tight ends and sometimes that does hurt guys' ability to get voted in. I love our team. I love a lot of our players. I think some of them are deserving of it. I don't have a say in a lot of that stuff, I want to see us consistently win football games and that's what's important. But I do like to see those guys get recognized for their accomplishments and happy for Aaron and Jalen. You always want to see as many guys as possible get recognized from your team."

(On the impact of S Nick Scott's absence yesterday on special teams and the stress that puts on different position groups on defense in addition to Scott's special teams' role)

"So, you look at it, (S) Nick (Scott) has always been a really big part of our special teams as a four-core player. He's been our 'PP' on punt pro (personal protector on punt protection). The one instance where we did get blocked, it was not an issue as a result of the PP. But any time you lose a player like Nick, there's going to be some form of a drop-off, but you expect guys to step up and I think (S) JuJu (Hughes) did a nice job in some of the positions that we were asking of him in those spots. We've got to be better collectively. As far as how we spread the special teams, roles and responsibilities. A lot of it is predicated on how many roles and how many phases does that guy play on. That's always a thing that you've got to balance, especially when you talk about the inside linebacker position with (ILB) Troy (Reeder) and with (ILB) Kenny (Young) and just really only having two of those guys. Now, (LB) Justin Hollins has some position-flex, as does (OLB) Natrez Patrick for us. But those guys have been instrumental parts of our (special) teams. I think (Outside Linebackers Coach) Chris Shula and (Assistant Head Coach/Linebackers Coach) Joe Barry with the outside and inside backers have done a nice job getting a rotation. It keeps those guys fresh and they're feeling good and they're able to contribute in both phases."